

MENTORSHIP: STRATEGICALLY LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN OFFICERS

BY

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AMERICAN OFFICERS**

by

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This Strategic Research Paper (SRP) addresses the strategic issues of mentoring African-American officers, fostering more effective mentorship programs, and specifying mentorship responsibilities. It recommends ways to resolve the lack of mentorship for minority Army officers. Lack of proper mentorship could adversely affect our nation's national interests by detracting from our military dominance, reducing our security, and weakening our diplomacy. African-American officers must proactively seek out mentors of any race. Senior military leaders, regardless of race, must welcome the opportunity to mentor African-American officers. Our nation expects its military officers to be competent, technically proficient and highly trained professionals in their various military occupational specialties. Mentorship is vital for all officers, regardless of race. In order to groom future African-American officers, we must implement new and innovative mentoring programs in the 21st century.

MENTORSHIP: STRATEGICALLY LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN OFFICERS

The Army is transforming itself into a new force for the future... They must be agile and adaptive in order to employ the capabilities that the future Army must possess. The Army must begin now to train the soldiers and grow the leaders for the Objective Force.¹

—General Eric K. Shinseki
Chief of Staff, Army

The United States (U.S.) is a diverse nation with a complex racial history. Even in the 21st century, the U.S. Army's African-American officers are not sufficiently mentored. Our nation has experienced slavery, economical depression, major wars and conflicts, racial oppression, and recent globalization. However, our Army still has shortcomings in mentorship, particularly in the development of African-American officers. Even so, African-American officers continue to emerge as leaders, despite the obstacles they must overcome. However, these obstacles could be less formidable if a mentorship program enabled them to realize their full potential. For this nation to continue to field a dominant Army, a better mentorship program must be built. African-American officers have proudly served and died for this great nation, but many were not afforded a quality mentorship program. Crispus Attucks, an early African-American, hero, never knew the meaning of mentorship, but he understood the prospect of freedom. An escaped slave, Crispus Attucks worked in the Boston Harbor as a dockworker and seaman. On 5 March 1770, Crispus Attucks and several other Bostonians were killed defying British troops in the Boston Common. The reality is that African-American slaves gained their freedom in 1865, while non-minority people fought and achieved their sovereignty from "Britain in a mere six years."²

History informs us that African-Americans officers, Soldiers, slaves, or freed slaves participated in the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican-American War, the Civil War, Indian Campaigns, the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, Desert Shield, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. African-American officers have a long legacy of involvement in our nation's wars; they wear the U.S. military uniform proudly. Many have fought with valor and honor to preserve this nation's freedom. African-American officers have shed and continue to shed the same blood on the modern battlefield as their non-minority counterparts. However, they are not supported by a good mentorship program. President Harry S. Truman, a World War I veteran, knew African-American Soldiers and civilians were treated unfairly in the armed forces and federal employment sector. Therefore, in a momentous strategic decision with no regard for public outcry, he issued Executive Orders 9800 and 9981 on 26 July 1948. "Truman's Executive Order 9980, Regulations Governing Fair Employment Practices Within the Federal Establishment, explicitly mandated the elimination of discriminatory practices throughout the federal government based on race, color, religion, or national origin."³ Furthermore, "his issuance of Executive Order 9981, which integrated the vast, segregated armed services" greatly altered the distorted cultural mindset of America's landscape.⁴

Despite the racial integration directed by of President Truman's Executive Order 9981, African-American officers still face challenging struggles to obtain higher ranks. This is a systemic issue. Today, African-American Soldiers, 61 years after Executive Order 9981, "make up about 17 percent of the total force, they are just 9 percent of all

officers, according to data obtained and analyzed by the Associated Press.”⁵

Significantly, there has never been an African-American Commandant of the Marine Corps, Chief of Staff of the Army, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, or Chief of Naval Operations.⁶ Indeed the U.S. Army War College, since its inception in 1901, has never had a 2-Star African-American Commandant.⁷ General (Retired) Colin Powell served as the first African-American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the first African-American Secretary of State.⁸ African-American officers continue to fight twice as hard as their non-minority officers for positions of authority, and their performances are more closely scrutinized than those of non-minority officers. African-American officers attend all the military service schools (Basic Course, Advanced Course, Immediate Level Education, Combined Arms School, Command General Staff College, Advanced Civil Schooling, Senior Service College), but still fail to obtain the aforementioned prestigious positions or other prestigious positions regularly. The playing field for African-American officers will remain unbalanced until firmer guidelines or policies are implemented. African-American officers contribute vitally to the nation’s security whether home or abroad. Nonetheless, they need better mentoring to develop into future strategic leaders. This SRP addresses four critical mentorship issues:

- Overall effectiveness of Army mentorship.
- Perceived racial issues in mentoring African-American officers.
- Building a better mentorship program for African-American Officers.
- Effectiveness of cross-racial mentoring.

Origin and Defining Mentoring / Mentorship

Department of Defense (DoD) offers a variety of definitions of mentoring or mentorship. Various interpretations of mentoring or mentorship can confuse our Soldiers and perhaps our senior leaders. Former Army Chief of Staff, General John A. Wickham Jr. mandated leadership as the U.S. Army theme in 1985. General Wickham promoted this theme to challenge Army leaders to motivate, to provide sound advice, and to mentor their subordinates. General Wickham's initiative quickly garnered enormous support throughout the Army, and mentoring was later adopted in all leadership courses. General Wickham had astute foresight and quickly realized the Army's definition of mentoring was dreadfully ambiguous. Indeed, the Army lacked an approved mentoring program. During General Wickham's tenure, Field Manual 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels, and Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-80, Executive Leadership, addressed mentoring. However, these two military publications did not adequately explain how to implement effective mentoring or provide sound guidance. General Wickham's maverick endeavor 24 years ago remains an on-going process for the institutional Army.⁹

The entire U.S. audience witnessed the relevance of mentoring in President George W. Bush's 2003 State of the Union Address: "Government will support the training and recruiting of mentors, yet it is the men and woman of America who will fill the need."¹⁰ Even President George W. Bush understands the importance of mentoring and how it can affect one's life, and career – and sustain America's future. Accordingly, DoD strategic leaders need to revise, clarify, and simplify the mentor terminology so all Army Soldiers understand and appreciate the concept.

First, consider the origins of the term “mentor”. It originates several thousand years ago in Greek mythology, in Homer’s *Odyssey*.¹¹ According to the Greek legend, the goddess Athene disguised herself as a male in the form of Mentos and then afforded sound advice and counseling to Odysseus’ son, named Telemachus. Odysseus had been far from home for 10 long years fighting the Trojan War, and then it took him another decade to return to his home in Ithaca. During Odysseus’ approximate 20 years away from home, Mentos nurtured Telemachus into manhood. Thus the Goddess Athene, disguised as Mentos, became a close advisor, and trusted friend of Telemachus.¹²

Strategic leaders cannot serve as effective mentors until they truly understand the mentoring process. Consider the following definitions: Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary offers a succinct definition: A mentor is “a friend of Odysseus entrusted with the education of Odysseus’ son Telemachus.”¹³ Roget’s New Thesaurus describes mentor as “one who advises another, especially officially or professionally: adviser, consultant, [or] counselor.”¹⁴ Military publications offer their own definitions: Field Manual 6-22 defines a mentor as “a leader with greater experience than the one receiving the mentoring provides guidance and advice; it is a future-oriented developmental activity focused on growing in the profession.”¹⁵ In addition, Army Regulation 600-100 describes mentorship as “a voluntary and developmental relationship that exists between a person with greater experience and a person with less experience, and which is characterized by mutual trust and respect.”¹⁶

African-American Strategic Leaders.

Frederick Douglass, an African American abolitionist, is well-known for his famous quotes. Accordingly, one of Frederick Douglass' historic quotes sets the tone for the three military strategic leaders below, and for African American Officers who continue to struggle for fair mentoring. "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."¹⁷

Thousands of African-American strategic leaders, whether military or civilian, have served America with distinction. Many great minds were lost during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, vicious Jim Crow laws, and aforementioned wars throughout the nation's tumultuous history. African-Americans defied the odds and have survived the brutal onslaught of injustice and bigotry. These African-Americans continued to serve our nation and contributed significantly to the national goals.

There are many noteworthy and admirable African-American heroes and heroines. These leaders, whether military or civilian, likely endured extreme isolation, and harsh adversity. Yet they prevailed through strong determination, sacrifice, and perseverance. The three individuals most relevant to this SRP are Henry Ossian Flipper, Benjamin Oliver Davis Sr., and Colin Powell. First, we should ask whether these three superb African-American Soldiers benefitted from any kind of mentoring. Then we should acknowledge their invaluable strategic leadership. According to the U.S. Army College, strategic leadership is defined as:

The process used by a leader to affect the achievement of a desirable and clearly understood vision by influencing the organizational culture, allocating resources, directing through policy and directive, and building consensus within a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous global environment which is marked by opportunities and threats.¹⁸

These three African-Americans displayed superb strategic leader core competencies before the U.S. Army instituted strategic leader competencies for its

officer corps. The conceptual, technical and interpersonal are core competencies currently used by senior strategic leaders today.¹⁹ They knew how to lead, how to build consensus, how to direct an organization, and how to make significant contributions to our nation's development.

Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper. Lieutenant Flipper made American black history as the third African-American cadet to attend the prestigious U.S. Military Academy (USMA) at West Point from July 1873 to June 1877, following in the daunting footsteps of African-American predecessors Michael Howard and James Smith.²⁰ Lieutenant Flipper is forever memorialized in our nation's history as the first African-American to graduate from the illustrious USMA, the first African-American Soldier commissioned in the U.S. Army, and the first African-American officer dismissed from service.²¹ "Flipper subsequently endured four years of grueling academic instruction and ostracism from white classmates before graduating fiftieth in a class of sixty-four on 14 June 1877."²² Upon graduation from the West Point, he was assigned to the all African-American Tenth U.S. Cavalry. Lieutenant Flipper fought valiantly in several Indian campaigns; he was a superb engineer and contributed to numerous engineer activities. However, Lieutenant Flipper's promising military career came to a grinding halt "when Colonel William R. Shafter accused him of embezzling \$3,791.77 in missing commissary funds that were assumed to be stolen."²³ This alleged incident was a serious crime, especially for a black officer without a mentor during turbulent times in the U.S. Army. During Lieutenant Flipper's court-martial, the embezzlement charges were dismissed, but he was found "guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and gentlemen, and dismissed from service on 30 June 1882."²⁴ Lieutenant Flipper endured

mental cruelty, and performed well as a strategic leader, despite racial inequalities. However, his career was tragically shortened because of blatant racism. Thus, he was unable to fulfill his promise as a strategic leader. Lieutenant Flipper is remembered today at West Point with a bust acknowledging the cruelty he suffered. Years after his death, he was granted a “posthumous honorable discharge.”²⁵

Brigadier General Benjamin Oliver Davis Sr. Benjamin Davis Sr. overcame numerous discriminatory obstacles to become first African-American promoted to Brigadier General (BG) in the U.S. Army.²⁶ His stellar accomplishments while serving in the U.S. Army shined brightly during this nation’s dark period of bigotry, racism, and discrimination towards African- American Soldiers. “He enlisted during the Spanish-American War in 1898 and joined the all-black Eighth U.S. Volunteer Infantry in Chickamauga, Georgia.”²⁷ Davis later enlisted in the Army with 9th Cavalry and rose thru the ranks quickly.²⁸ While assigned to Troop 1 of the 9th Cavalry, he met “Major CHARLES YOUNG, the third African American to graduate from West Point (in 1889), who was the only black officer in the army at that time.”²⁹ Major Young provided extraordinary mentorship to Benjamin Davis assisting him in passing the commissioning test for 2nd Lieutenant. Major Young’s extraordinary contributions in working with 2nd Lieutenant Davis exemplify superb courageous dedication and selfless service during barbaric times for African-American Soldiers. After Benjamin Davis earned his commission as 2nd Lieutenant, he quickly ascended through the ranks to colonel. “While the Army routinely promoted Davis, he was assigned to noncombat positions, where he would not be in command of white personnel.”³⁰ BG Davis stated, “I am getting to the point where I am beginning to believe that I’ve been kept as far in the background as

possible.”³¹ However, his demeaning situation only made him stronger as he endured the dreaded discriminatory hardships. “Davis was finally put in charge of troops in 1938, when he was appointed regimental commander and instructor of the all-black 369th National Guard Infantry in New York City.”³² BG Davis was strongly supported by the African- American community when President Franklin D. Roosevelt failed to highlight his name on the promotion list to General.³³ Furthermore, BG Davis clashed with General Dwight D. Eisenhower after refusal of a plan to allow black Soldiers as fillers in non-minority units, and later the plan was revised to assign black Soldiers to assigned filler positions in non-minority outfits.³⁴ BG Davis exemplified strategic leadership. His relentless fight to eliminate unfair treatment towards black Soldiers has not gone unnoticed. However, BG Davis’ military success was shaped by Major Charles Young’s mentoring early in his career.

General Colin Powell. African-American Soldiers who have survived the onslaught of racial brutality and discrimination have paved the roads for future generations. But not many African-Americans officers earned promotions to Brigadier General, to say nothing of 4-Star General. Only “five” African-Americans have been promoted to 4-Star General since the U.S Army integrated on 26 July 1948.³⁵ Currently there is one 4-star African- American General in the U.S. military, General William Ward, Commander of United States Africa Command. ³⁶ Colin Powell is a great leader; he exhibited superb character and foresight throughout his military career. However, General Powell, like many other great African-American officers, experienced racism, discrimination, and harsh treatment during his illustrious military career. But he persisted as a model Army Soldier for others to emulate; “he resented the racism and

indignities that he encountered, particularly in the segregated communities surrounding the camp, but he refused to let his anger dictate his actions.”³⁷ Indeed his military career soared after his selection as a White House Fellow and subsequent assignment to various command positions.³⁸ However, none of his military developmental growth was possible without the keen mentoring from Frank Carlucci and Caspar Weinberger, both of whom worked in President Ronald Reagan’s administration.³⁹ Colin Powell benefitted from invaluable mentoring from his former bosses, who prepared him to serve as the first African-American National Security Advisor, Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, and Secretary of State.⁴⁰ Colin Powell acquired indispensable core strategic leadership competencies from his mentors; they showed him how to negotiate the military hierarchy and interagency officials. General Powell is now one of the most admirable and influential figures in the world. His opinions are highly regarded. He is probably, next to President Barack Obama, the most admired American in the world.

ROCKS Inc

African-Americans have learned to collaborate for the greater good. They have organized to improve their personal, social, professional, and networking skills. “In 1974, THE ROCKS, INC. began as a metropolitan Washington, DC organization with one chapter. Since then, THE ROCKS, INC. has steadily grown to a membership of over 1300 members in 23 chapters and 7 interest groups established worldwide.”⁴¹ The ROCKS mentoring program brings together experienced successful officers who serve as mentors and younger officers who enter into a voluntary mentoring relationship with their selected role models. Indeed mentoring is the primary ROCKS activity: “Since mentoring is a core value of THE ROCKS, INC., we are committed to establishing and

maintaining a world class program that is well connected to other mentoring programs in the Army.”⁴²

ROCKS has always extended its membership to officers of all races. Military officers should strongly consider joining ROCKS and serving as mentors to further the organization’s mission. Indeed, in recent years attendance at ROCKS meetings has fallen off. As a ROCKS member of the U.S. Army War College chapter, I have gained greater fellowship and exchange professional knowledge and experience that will enhance my military career. ROCKS continues to serve young African-American officers, but too many of them are overlooking this professional opportunity.

ROCKS must expand its membership and develop 21st century African-American officers into competent strategic leaders and critical thinkers serving this nation’s proud fighting force. ROCKS founding leaders’ vision remains relevant for developing future Army officers and chiseling a productive mentorship model, which all branches of services should adopt.

Life Experiences

In my 21 years of military service to this nation, African-American officers have not been mentored or groomed for success, as are non-minority officers. As a former Infantry Officer and now a Signal Corps Officer, I have served in a variety of Active Component Organizations, Army Reserve Organizations, and DoD Inter-Agency programs. But, I have had little access to mentorship programs and very little mentoring. My service in the Infantry Branch was the most rewarding, because the senior leadership appeared to have a vested interest in African-American officers’ development. However, during my time in the Infantry Branch in the late 1980’s, there

was no defined mentoring program, although General Wickham aggressively advocated one. Nonetheless, it was still evident to me that even though the Infantry senior officers tried to mentor African-American officers, we had to work twice as hard to come even remotely close to getting that coveted top block on the Officer Evaluation Report (OER). I worked very hard to earn high OER remarks, sometimes in the face of overwhelming challenges at various duty stations.

As my career prospered and my responsibilities expanded, I was responsible for rating African-American officers and non-minority officers. I saw it as my duty to share my experiences and my best counsel with all officers' minority and non-minority. As we rise in rank, we have an increasing obligation to train and mentor our young officers and afford them the opportunity to develop and rise to positions of leadership. However, I was routinely denied this kind of support as a young officer.

I served in military organizations where the commander was a West Point graduate and at least two of the staff members were his USMA subordinates. The West Point commander seemed to have a greater interest. He used a hands-on approach with his young West Pointers, but not with us ROTC graduates. Many believe that West Point graduates achieve their career success because of such exposure, caring, and voluntary mentoring. Further, there is a widespread perception that an officer's source of commission is a determining factor for assignment to jobs of responsibility, which often lead to greater career success. Nonetheless, in the cases of Lieutenant Henry Flipper and BG Benjamin Davis, their school affiliations did not transcend the racist challenges they endured throughout their careers. I am a graduate of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (N.C. A&T SU), which has produced some

great Army ROTC officers. But only “five N.C. A&T SU” officers have attained the rank of general officer after graduating from this historic black university and none higher than Major General.⁴³

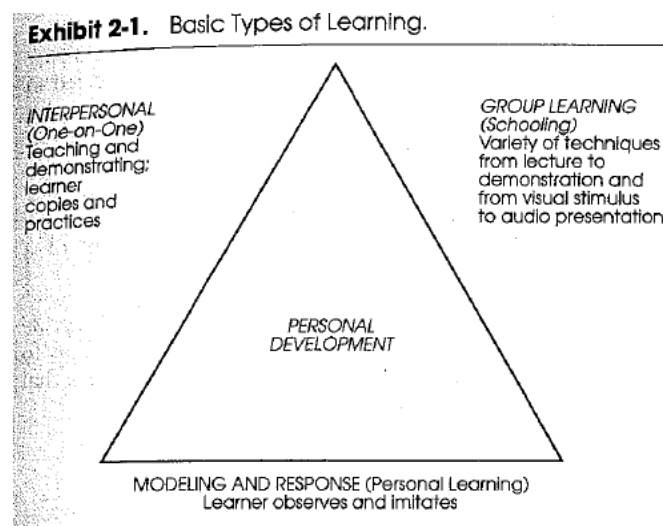
I had the distinct pleasure of meeting Lieutenant General (U.S. Army, Retired) Russell Honoré prior to his retirement, when he served as Commanding General of U.S. First Army. General Honoré and many of my fellow graduates come from simple roots, but we know what leads to success in the Army. We came from strong historic black college ROTC programs. Then somewhere along the way, someone acknowledged our potential and enabled us to advance our careers. No one can achieve that level of success without someone offering some type of guidance and quality mentoring. Indeed, an Army officer must demonstrate superb competency, technical knowledge, and leadership traits and qualities to advance in the ranks. But mentoring is the vital ingredient.

African-American minority cadets during my ROTC experience were forced to select at least three combat arms branches before commissioning to offset minority shortages in the combat arms branches. The U.S Army still believed minorities lacked the brains and ability to lead non-minority officers at high profile duty installations. We were regarded as simply incapable of holding leadership positions. Nonetheless, military career opportunities for minority officers have increased dramatically since President Truman issued Executive Order 9981 in 1948. However, just imagine what general officers like Colin Powell and Calvin Waller, who were commissioned in the 1950s, experienced in the combat arms branches during that time. They succeeded

spectacularly – but not with the support of mentors. However, Powell later benefitted greatly from mentoring, as noted earlier.

Mentor-Mentee Partnership

In a successful mentoring relationship, the mentor and mentee become partners. Gordon Shea neatly outlined several prominent factors for creating a superb mentor-mentee partnership.⁴⁴ During the formal mentoring partnership, the mentee can expect: “an opportunity to learn from the mentor’s particular experiences, personal insights, knowledge, and know-how.”⁴⁵ The mentee, on the other hand, has his or her own important responsibilities for building a balanced partnership. Among other things, the mentee must “appreciate the mentor’s help without holding him or her in awe, so no sense of inferiority or fear invades the relationship.”⁴⁶ A solid mentor-mentee partnership enhances the mentee’s social interaction, self-esteem, and confidence in a public



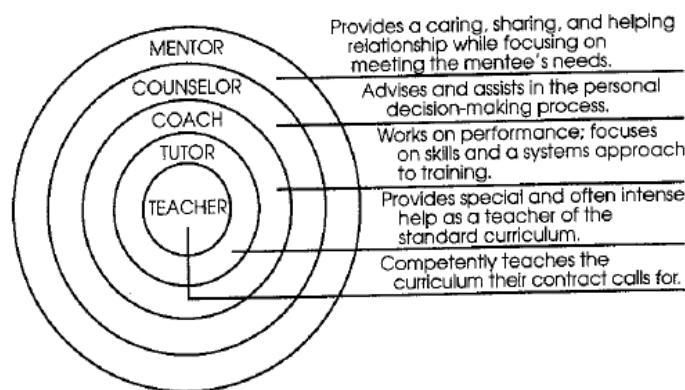
forum. Below are three of Shea's mentoring exhibits.

Figure 1:

Figure 1 depicts Shea's representation of three essential types of learning: Shea asserts that modeling and response is "the most basic form of teaching and learning, occurs almost from the time we are born."⁴⁷ On the other hand, Interpersonal training is a "form of conscious human development probably began when groups of people had something – an art or a bit of science or technology – they wanted to pass on to talented, gifted, or, perhaps, just interested individuals."⁴⁸ Finally, Shea informs us that "group teaching and learning is a response to the economics of need and the availability of knowledge or skills that can be effectively communicated to many others."⁴⁹ Mentoring is a powerful tool that can enhance all three types of learning.

In Figure 2, Shea portrays the five important theoretical types of one-on-one learning relationships, noting differences in their respective relationships.⁵⁰ This model depicts the teacher at the core, while mentoring encircles all the inner roles.⁵¹ The

Exhibit 2-2. Modes of One-on-One Teaching and Helping.



layers are significantly linked through effective mentoring. In other words, the mentor assures that the mentee fully benefits from all of his or her learning opportunities.

Figure 2:

Figure 3 depicts another Shea scheme for mentoring. This model illustrates the “spectrum of mentor interactions”.⁵² This model includes situational responses, informal relationship, and formal program or traditional forms of mentoring.⁵³ The situational responses “may include sharp, beneficial life- or style-altering effects on the mentee.”⁵⁴ The informal relationship allows for greater personal interactions between mentor and mentee. The informal mentoring relationship is “very responsive to mentee needs.”⁵⁵ The most structured of the three is the formal mentoring program. This program is “the source of a developing relationship – friendship.”⁵⁶ The U.S. Army should strongly consider using all of Shea’s methods to develop effective mentor and mentee partnerships.

Exhibit 3-1. Spectrum of mentor interactions.

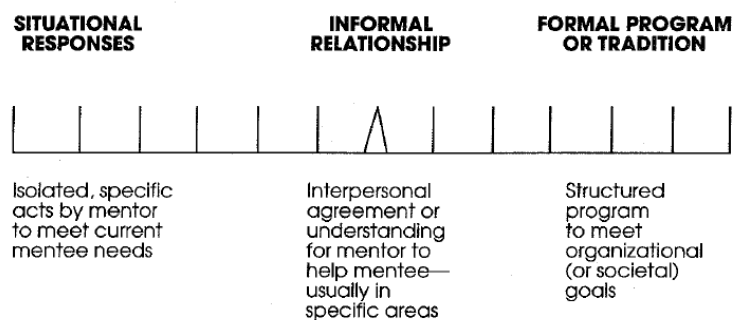


Figure 3:

Key Differences – Leaders and Mentors. In 1985, mentoring became an important topic of discussion and urgent issue in the U.S. Army. General Wickham vigorously advocated a defined mentoring program between leaders and subordinates. U.S. Army Major James O. Patterson then stressed the importance of mentoring.⁵⁷ He carefully articulated the major differences between a leader and mentor, as depicted in Figure 4 below.⁵⁸ According to Major Patterson, “The essence of military mentorship is

that what the mentor does for the associate is to improve the force in the long term.”⁵⁹ In addition, “Good leadership – while it, too, may lead to that – is usually more concerned with immediate goals such as success of the unit.”⁶⁰ So General Wickham and Major Patterson sought to improve the weak Army regulations and clarify dictionary definitions of mentoring.

Key Differences – Leaders and Mentors

Leader	Mentor
1. Owes equal attention to all subordinates	1. Devotes extra time to a single individual, yet is not bound to do so
2. Often, if not always, is in the associate’s chain of command	2. Very seldom in the associate’s chain of command, to preclude favoritism in duty performance.
3. Style and methods are fairly well established and addressed in doctrinal literature.	3. Strength of style and methods rest in an idiosyncratic approach. Little or no doctrinal back ground or resource material.
4. Acting as a leader is a requirement for all persons in leadership positions.	4. Strictly voluntary.
5. Time related due to chain of command dependency.	5. Time independent: can last until death of either associate or mentor.
6. Has a legal base in UCMJ, MTOEs, oath of commission, Constitution, etc.	6. Authority base is personal consent.

Figure 4: Describes Major Patterson’s distinct key differences between a leader and mentor.

But 24 years after General Wickham’s and Major Patterson’s profound interest in establishing an effective mentoring program, the U.S. Army does not fully exploit the developmental potential of mentoring. The Army needs leaders and mentors. Mostly, it needs leaders who are effective mentors.

Positive Factors of Mentoring

Mentoring is important because it provides an excellent opportunity to shape young minority officer's military career progression. Mentoring young officers increases their prospects of a productive career. Effective mentoring enhances career development, promotes diversity, improves leadership skills, develops officers personally and professionally, increases fellowship, and potentially produces dynamic future senior leaders.

Negative Factors of Not Mentoring

Failure to mentor our Soldiers could disable the Army. Without mentoring, the Army organizational structure (squad, platoon, and company levels) could devolve into dysfunctional units. The lack of effective communication between parties could fragment the organization and foster resentments among officers. Morale issues and negative attitudes could lead to career counseling and eventual removal from the military. A hostile environment can emerge if mentorship is neglected. Minority officers, may sense barriers between themselves and their non-minority counterparts. This alienation exacerbates the lack of communication. Young minority officers often do not have the luxury or privilege to have a minority rater, let alone a minority senior rater. Regardless of a rater's or senior rater's skin color, a young officer must express their goals openly and seek advice from senior officers instead of being a loner. Also, minority officers tend to leave the Army earlier and sometimes with a very bad taste in their mouth. If disaffected officers are allowed to remain in the Army, they tend not be as dedicated and tend to negatively influence new officers and Soldiers – as we are seeing today. Therefore, it is imperative that senior officers, regardless of race, mentor minority

officers and incorporate them into social activities, planning missions, and other organizational activities.

Identifying Lack of Mentorship

A young officer's earliest experience with the military comes in the Officer Basic Corps and ROTC training. Then the young lieutenant will be assigned to a platoon to begin the voyage of learning the military craft. So that young officer's first mentor should be the platoon sergeant. I personally witnessed many new lieutenants who were struggling to succeed in their first assignment. Many times, they were victims of bad advice from other officers who should have been mentoring them on the right things to do, and showing them how to become effective officers. What is meant by young officers being victims of bad advice? Often new lieutenants are told that they do not have to listen to their non-commissioned officers. That is terrible advice. We should understand that mentorship is not just between rater and ratee. So any officer can influence a young officer in a positive or negative manner. To get new officers started on the right path in their respective careers, they should be given professional development through officer professional development programs, counseling, and confident familiarity with members of their unit.

Army Mentorship Program

The Department of the Army, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 is the proponent for establishing a mentoring program and informing Soldiers of the benefits of mentoring. The Deputy Chief of Chief, G-1 has produced an Army mentorship handbook that formulates questions, answers, and advice on mentoring. The handbook provides an individual development action plan, a mentorship agreement, and instilled Army

values.⁶¹ The Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1 even established a website for interested mentors and mentees for the voluntary mentorship program.⁶² However, the Army offers no other information on mentorship beyond the G-1's handbook. The Army G-1 basically compiled historical data from previous authors, researched issues concerning mentoring, fine-tuned the mentorship terminology, and produced a source handbook. But has the Army G-1 actually fostered more effective mentoring? Furthermore, the Army G-1 makes no mention of how often his office e-mails mentoring surveys to Soldiers for critical feedback. This is apparently another lip service paper drill conducted simply to meet a requirement at the higher staff level.

Recommendations

This SRP provides numerous suggestions for enhancing mentoring. However, this SRP seeks finally to provide culminating recommendations to better prepare and support minority officers in the U.S. Army. DoD leaders should reconsider revising the DA FORM 67-9-1, MAR 2006 Officer Evaluation Report Support Form. The OER should include a block that reports whether the rater involuntarily or voluntarily mentored the ratee Soldier during the rating period at least twice. Secondly, the ratee Soldier on the DA FORM 67-9-1 should be afforded the opportunity to state whether he or she received meaningful mentoring, required quarterly counseling, or a combination of both during the rating period. Thirdly, the senior officer must be diplomatic yet passionate about mentoring a minority officer. Fourthly, the U.S. Army should make mentoring mandatory and hold raters and senior raters accountable for providing mentoring. The officer evaluation reports should include mentoring experiences. Fifth, fostering an effective climate for minority officers and mentors is essential. By fostering a personal

relationship and communicating with the ratees, the rater lays the groundwork for effective mentoring. Six, the rater should encourage minority officers to participate in social events. Likewise, ratees and raters should discuss assignments and career enhancing jobs in frequent face-to-face or telephonic quarterly counseling. The rater should take a hands-on approach in the ratee's professional development and encourage the ratee to read the right professional books and articles. Seventh, effective mentoring depends on mutual trust. Young officers look towards senior officers for realistic advice and trust. It is important to develop a well-rounded professional officer and not mislead an individual with false flattery or unrealistic goals. Trust produces results and creates a favorable working environment, but trust does not come easily in our diverse U.S. Army. Soldiers come from all backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicity and they come with much promise – and with attitudes. Therefore, building trust is extremely important. As that trust gels, it infuses the rater and ratee's personal relationship and fosters a positive climate. Trust then opens the way for honest and effective communication that fosters great mentorship. Eighth, the Army leaders must eliminate the "good old boy"⁶³ network for minority officers and other non-minority officers to excel. This network has been around for centuries in the military, and African-American officers are still fighting lingering effects of this institutional system. This may explain the mass exodus of younger officers. Perception is reality, but eliminating the network does not resolve the mentoring issue. A person must want to mentor someone for the Army to have an effective mentoring program. Effective mentoring will most likely help to retain quality officers who feel they have a purpose in serving this great nation.

Conclusion

According to Benjamin Disraeli, "Perseverance and tact are the two most important qualities for the individual who wants to move ahead."⁶⁴ African-American officers must learn to take control and project themselves as confident, astute, team players in the political U.S. Army arena. There are numerous tools available for growth in organizations filled with experienced leadership and knowledge. Learning how to tap into these resources can be a daunting challenge, but doing nothing is shameful. African-American officers are visionaries, innovators, dreamers, creators, leaders, builders, and doers. We made it past slavery, the unwritten and written Jim Crow laws, and civil rights movements. We were hassled and discouraged and told we lacked the fortitude and creative cerebral capacity to lead other non-minority Soldiers. However, hundreds of African-Americans Soldiers laid the foundation blocks for the current generation of black Soldiers by fighting and losing their lives in the American Revolutionary War for freedom. Mentoring an African-American Soldier was unheard of in the old Army, although we died on the same battlefield as non-minority Soldiers. So, young African-American officers must undergo a reality check and learn the meaning of perseverance. African-Americans are usually the last to be hired but will surely be the first fired. African-American officers can pursue a great future in the U.S. Army, but only a select few will achieve the general officer level and hold prestigious duty positions. African-American officers must be aggressive in selecting a positive role model mentor, regardless of their race. Seeking a positive mentor increases our potential for greater success. Mentoring eliminates the pitfalls of failure. When selecting a mentor, look for a people-oriented person, an excellent motivator who has a good work ethic, a self-confident teacher, and one who is vested in your success. The mentoring program,

although voluntary, is available to shape the minds and careers of African-American officers as strategic leaders and critical thinkers well into the 21st century. L.A. Doloz beautifully articulates the contributions of mentors: "Mentors are guides. They lead us along the journey of our lives. We trust them because they have been there before. They embody our hopes, cast light on the way ahead, interpret arcane signs, warn us of lurking dangers and point out unexpected delights along the way."⁶⁵ As U.S. Army leaders, we must reach out to our younger African-American officers and enable them to prosper from the benefits of mentoring.

Endnotes

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